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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: POLISARIO SECRETARY GENERAL SAYS THE NON-VIOLENT STRUGGLE CONTINUES

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

1. (SBU) In a departure from recent sabre-rattling rhetoric, Polisario leader Abdelaziz told a press gathering in Algiers June 11 it was the intent of the Sahrawis to use peaceful means in their struggle for self-determination. Blaming the Government of Morocco for the violence of late May, Abdelaziz said the Sahrawis, in the quest for their legitimate rights, had no intention of taking up arms unless pushed to do so by the Moroccan authorities. Abdelaziz stressed that the Sahrawis' dispute was with the colonial behavior of the GOM and not the Moroccan people themselves; renewed his calls for the international community to intervene through the United Nations and the Security Council; and urged Spain and France to take up the Sahrawi cause. The Algerian press gave wide coverage to Abdelaziz's remarks, which came on the heels of our message to the GOA and Polisario that return to armed struggle would be unacceptable and counterproductive.

SAHRAWIS ENGAGED IN A PEACEFUL STRUGGLE

2. (U) In a press forum organized June 11 in Algiers by the Arabic-language daily newspaper El Bilad, Secretary General of the Polisario Mohamed Abdelaziz reaffirmed the Sahrawi pursuit of a "non-violent" struggle in the Western Sahara. Abdelaziz pledged that "the protests, strikes and sit-ins would continue to be peaceful" in seeking "the liberation of political prisoners" and "the organization of a referendum on self-determination." Abdelaziz added: "The cannons and guns have quieted, but not the voices of a people in search of its self-determination."

3. (U) In regard to Morocco, Abdelaziz reiterated the Sahrawis' pursuit of a "peaceful struggle in the hope that Morocco will not push us to take up arms again." Abdelaziz regretted that the GOM had "violently repressed" the peaceful protests which took place May 23-29. He commented that the "Moroccan authorities reinforced their repressive apparatus (in directing it) against the protests through which the Sahrawis exercised a legitimate right...."

ENEMY IS GOM COLONIALIST BEHAVIOR, NOT THE MOROCCAN PEOPLE

4. (U) While he clearly put the blame on Morocco for recent violence, and pronounced "unacceptable" that "foreign observers and the international press were prevented by the Moroccan colonizer from visiting" the territories of the Western Sahara, Abdelaziz also held out an olive branch to the Moroccans: "Our enemy is not Morocco but the phenomenon of Moroccan colonization....The Moroccans are our friends, neighbors, brothers....Our view is that ... (they have been victims) since 1975 of propaganda that caused (them) to lose sight of the truth....We do not lose hope that the Moroccan citizen will say no to the imprisonment of women and no to the repression of the Sahrawis."

RENEWS APPEAL FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION AND INTERVENTION

5. (U) Abdelaziz renewed his "urgent" appeal to the international community to pressure Morocco and create the conditions necessary for the protection of human life and the legitimate exercise of Sahrawi rights. He called on "the United Nations and the Security Council to fulfill their responsibilities in the Western Sahara as they have done in other parts of the world." Abdelaziz noted that "Spain ... could play an important role," and urged France to "assume its responsibilities as a member of the Security Council and a country very close to Morocco in order to afford the Sahrawi civilian population respect for its elemental rights."

6. (U) In the context of Abdelaziz' remarks and the potential role the U.S. could play, the Algerian press frequently referred to a letter from Congressman Pitts and other members of Congress to Secretary Rice urging the Bush Administration to "intervene" so that a referendum on self-determination could be organized in the Western Sahara.

ERDMAN